



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 8, 2003

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## **SAN DIEGO COUNTY TESTS DEAD BIRDS FOR WEST NILE VIRUS** *Surveillance Activities Increase as Threat Draws Closer*

The State of California Department of Health Services recently announced that they would begin testing **all** dead wild birds (except for pigeons, doves, chickens and pet birds) found in Southern California for West Nile Virus (WNV). Increased surveillance shows that WNV is on the move and is closing in on San Diego County. Recent surveillance activities have turned up mosquitoes, sentinel chickens, crows and a sparrow that all tested positive for WNV in surrounding counties.

Recently in Los Angeles County, ten dead crows tested positive for WNV; the dead crows were found in Covina, Temple City, Arcadia and Whittier. All had been picked up by local Mosquito and Vector Control Districts and shipped to the California Animal Health and Food Safety Lab at Davis for initial processing. Subsequent testing by the UC Davis Arbovirus Diagnostic Laboratory showed that these crows tested positive for WNV. Mosquitoes were found positive for WNV in Imperial, Riverside and Los Angeles counties. Sentinel chicken flocks have turned up positive for WNV in Imperial and Riverside counties.

West Nile virus is primarily a bird disease. Dead birds are good early indicators that the disease is active in our area. While most birds can become ill from WNV, species most at risk include corvids (crows, mockingbirds, jays) and raptors (hawks, eagles and owls). Mosquitoes that feed on infected birds become carriers and can pass the virus to humans, horses and other hosts when they bite. If you find a dead bird, do not handle it. **Dead birds do not need to be reported if:** they have been hit by a car, shot, or killed by animals; are covered with ants or flies; have a foul odor; or if their bodies are not intact. To report dead birds or mosquito breeding areas please call (858) 694-2888.

Protect yourself from WNV by wearing long sleeves and pants when outdoors, especially at dawn or dusk. Use insect repellent containing DEET. Keep screens on doors and windows. Protect your community by eliminating standing water on your property. For more information about the WNV, visit the official County WNV website at [www.SDFightTheBite.com](http://www.SDFightTheBite.com).

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